

# THE ADVENT

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*A Quarterly Devoted to the Exposition of  
Sri Aurobindo's Vision of the Future*



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# *The Advent*

1954

*My Lord, here is Thy advice to all, for  
this year:*

*"Never boast about anything, let your  
acts speak for you."*

THE MOTHER



# The ADVENT

FEBRUARY 1954

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He who acquires for himself alone, acquires ill though he  
may call it heaven and virtue.

SRI AUROBINDO





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The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - - Sri Aurobindo.

## EDITORIALS\*

### THE SPIRAL UNIVERSE

**E**VOOLUTION does not proceed in a straight line, but in a spiral. That is to say, it is not a constant progress in one direction, but consists of progression, regression and an ultimate progression. The spiral movement means that all things must enter into the phenomenon of evolution, so that it is not one thing only that progresses and others remain behind but that all move forward—all move forward but at different speeds and also from different starting-points. And they move not straight as the crow flies, but in a circle like the soaring eagle. When you concentrate upon one point of the circle, you will see relatively to it many others not advancing at all but receding and the point itself will seem at times to be going back towards a position already left behind. One goes back to pick up certain elements that have not been included in the progress, not properly dealt with. It happens usually that when you progress in one thing, you forget

<sup>1</sup> Based on the Mother's talks



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another; so you have to turn back and take up the neglected element. Thus you have to go round and round, as it were, until you include the totality of your being, even embrace the totality of the universe. When you have, however, gathered the bypassed factor and come back to the original position from where you seemed to have regressed, you find that you are not exactly at the same point but at a corresponding point on a higher plane. That forms a spiral, not merely a circle.

There are, in the universe, an infinite number of points moving, each forming a spiral; so there are an infinite number of spirals. And these spirals do not lie only side by side, but cross each other and thus give an aspect of contrariness and contradictoriness. So if you wish to take a total view of the movement of universal progress, you will be somewhat puzzled. There are so many lines that advance and there are so many which recede at the same time. Some come into the light, others go into the background and none independent or self-sufficient. There is a sort of intermingling, even coordination.

The universe can thus be conceived as a globe consisting of an infinite number of intersecting spirals. One can give to each spiral a different colour, each representing one aspect of nature's movement. A model globe of this kind may perhaps be constructed. A section only of the curve of a spiral is on the outside, the rest is within the globe and can be seen because of its special colour, provided we consider the globe as something transparent. It is these multiple sections outside that form the surface of the globe. The inside is of course full of spirals, excepting that section of a spiral which is outside. And yet though crossing and recrossing they do not form an opaque mass. One can see through and follow the brilliant lines of various colours. That is how I see it. You can try to make a geometrical figure of it, if possible.

Nature has a plan of its own. It is not like the coherent rational plan of man. Nature's plan is made of an aspiration, a decision and a goal. But the way is quite fantastic, so it appears to man. Nature seems to move from moment to moment, under the stress of the occasion; there are advances, withdrawals, trials, contradictions, demolitions of things, laborious building up, and again throwing down. It is a complete chaos. She begins a thing, leaves it half done, takes up another, rejects one thing altogether, begins anew something left off, makes, remakes, unmakes, separates, mixes up. She follows a million lines of advance at the same time but not from the same point and each with its own speed and rhythm. There is such a tangle that seems to make no sense. Still there is a plan, she pursues an object



## THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

which seems to be very clear to her, although veiled to the human eye. The spiral globe I spoke of was meant to give some idea of this complex unity in Nature's plan.

You can bring in a better order, with less waste and more efficiency a more conscious organisation. But for that man must change his own inner organisation first. In his own consciousness and being he must bring out a new order, a new cosmos.

28-10-1953.

## THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

God has created the world, the material world as it is? Yes and No, more "No" than "Yes". For he has not created it directly. There have been many creators, rather *formateurs*, form-makers, in between the world and God, who joined in the work of creation. Who are they? They have been given various names. Creation generally follows a principle of gradation. It is done step by step, world rising out of world successively. Each world is a particular state of being, a particular mode of consciousness. Each state is inhabited by entities, individualities, personalities and each one has created a world around him or assisted in the creation of certain types or species upon earth. The last of these creators or Fashioners are those of the vital. At the top are those of what Sri Aurobindo calls the Overmind. It was these that created, that is to say, gave the first forms to earthly beings and things. They sent out their emanations and these again theirs in their turn and so on. Thus it was not the Divine Will which acted directly upon Matter and gave the world the form it could or should have had. There are layers and planes, graded intermediaries through which the Will has had to act. I spoke of the overmental and the vital plane. There is also the mental plane between them. There are mental beings who are also creators, giving form to some beings that have taken body upon earth.

Thus, there is a tradition which says that the world of insects is the outcome of the creators of the vital world. That is why when you see the insects under a microscope they take on appearances that are absolutely diabolical. Enlarged on a screen they look like veritable monsters, so terrifying they are. Microscopic monsters they are. So it is said, beings of the vital world thought of amusing themselves and created these impossible beasts making human existence uncomfortable.



You can of course ask how these intermediaries themselves came into being, not out of the Divine? Intermediaries come out of other still higher and higher intermediaries till the chain reaches the Supreme. Originally, that is to say, if you trace back to the original source, there is there, of course, only the Divine. Then how has the deformation come in? I explained to you once that if you do not remain one with the Divine, under his direct influence, do not follow the movement of creation or expansion exactly as the Divine wills, this rupture of contact is sufficient to bring about the greatest evil of all, division. Even the most luminous, the most powerful beings may decide to follow their own movement instead of obeying the divine movement. They may be in themselves marvellous beings, and human beings, if they saw them, would take them for the Divine himself, yet they can, since they follow their own will and work not in harmony with the universe, be the source of the greatest disorders. There is nothing that is not the Divine, only there comes about a disorder, that is to say, each thing is not in its proper place. The problem is, this has to be remedied.

As to the question why this deviation, this evil at all, I can say, first of all, what you call evil may be only what is not convenient to you, but from the standpoint of universal arrangement that may be the most convenient. Secondly, the thing might have been just an accident, so to say, in the beginning. And what we are concerned with is not so much its why or even how but with the remedy to be found for the evil that is there. Viewing philosophically, however, we may note that the universe in which we live is evidently one movement out of many (actual and possible), that it follows its own law which is not the same elsewhere, that if the principle on which this universe has been created is that of free will, then you cannot prevent the disorderly movement from happening until a knowledge comes and illumines the choice. If one is free to choose, one may choose the wrong thing, not necessarily the right thing, for if it were decided from beforehand that the choice must be always good and in the right direction, then the choice will no longer be free.

But in reality these questions cannot be adequately answered in that way. It is a problem to which mental answers—of which the mental formulations even—only serve to diminish the dimensions of the problem; the question itself reduces the problem to a more or less elementary formula corresponding only vaguely and superficially and incompletely to the reality of things.

To be able to understand you must become. If you want to understand



## THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

the why and the how of the universe you must identify yourself with the universe. And that is not easy.

In truth the question itself is wrong. It is childish. It presupposes things that are themselves questionable. There are certain ideas about creation which have been almost universally current, more or less permanently accepted by human thought during ages; they are of an astounding simplicity. There is a world here, it is said, and up there somewhere there is a being called God. This person one day thought of creating some kind of thing, a visible form. The world was the result. Evidently we see a lot of mistakes in his work. We conclude the creator perhaps is a well-meaning benevolent person, but not all-powerful; some other thing or being there is that contradicts him. Or perhaps he is all-powerful but then has no heart and must be cruelty itself—viewing the condition of his creation which is a story of sorrow and trouble and misery. Such an idea, I say, is simplicity itself, the simplicity of a child brain. When one speaks of God the creator as a potter making a pot, one thinks of him as a human being, only in bigger proportions. Truly, it is not God who has made man in his image, it is man who has made God in his image.

As I say, the question is wrongly put. The very form of the question already assumes a certain notion about God and creation. Your postulates or axioms themselves are vitiated.

The universe and its creator are not separate things, they are one and identical in their origin. The universe is God himself projected into Space (and Time). So the universe is the Divine in one aspect or another. You cannot divide the two, making one the creator and the other his work, the watchmaker and his watch. You put your idea of the Divine upon him and ask, why he has created such a nasty world. If the Divine were to answer, "It is not I, it is yourself. Become myself again, you will no longer feel and see as you do now. You are not yourself, therefore your question and your problem"! Indeed when you unite your consciousness with the divine consciousness there is no longer any problem. Everything appears then natural and simple, and correct and as it should be. It is when you cut yourself from your origin and stand outside, in front of him and against him that all the trouble begins. Of course you may ask, how is it that the Divine has tolerated a part of himself going out and separating itself and creating all this disorder? I would reply on behalf of the Divine, "If you want to know, you had better unite yourself with the Divine, for that is the only way of knowing why he has done so. It is not by questioning him by your mind

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that you will get the answer. The mind cannot know. And I repeat, when you come to this identification, all problems are solved. The feeling, one can explain, that things are not all right, that they should be otherwise comes precisely from the fact that there is a divine will unfolding itself in a continuous progression, that things that were and are have to give place to things that shall be and shall be better and better than they have been. The world that was good yesterday will no longer be so tomorrow. The universe might have appeared quite harmonious in some other age but now appears quite discordant: it is because we see the possibility of a better universe. If we found it as it should be, we would not do what we have to do, we would not try to make it better. Even so, we would conceive the Divine in a very human way; for we remain imprisoned within ourselves, confined to this consciousness of ours which is like a grain of sand in the infinite immensity. You want to understand the immensity? That is not possible. It is possible only under one condition; be one with the immensity. The drop of water cannot very well ask how is the ocean: it has to lose itself into the ocean.

14-10-1953.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA



## A POEM

I WALKED beside the waters of a world of light  
On a gold ridge guarding two seas of high-rayed night  
One was divinely topped with a pale bluish moon  
And swam as in a happy deep spiritual swoon  
More conscious than earth's waking; the other's wide delight  
Billowed towards an ardent orb of diamond white.  
But where I stood, there joined in a bright marvellous haze  
The mirrored moons with the ridge's golden blaze  
I knew not of two wakings or two mighty sleeps  
Mixed the great diamond fires and the pale pregnant deeps,  
But all my glad expanding soul flowed satisfied  
Around me and became the mystery of their tide.  
As one who finds his own eternal self, content,  
Needing naught else beneath the spirit's firmament,  
I knew not Space, it heard no more Time's running feet,  
Termless, fulfilled, lost richly in itself, complete.  
And so it might have lain for ever. But there came  
A dire intrusion wrapped in married cloud and flame,  
Across the blue-white moon-hush of my magic seas  
A sudden sweeping of immense peripheries  
Of darkness ringing lambent lustres; shadowy-vast  
A nameless dread, a Power incalculable passed  
Whose feet were death, whose wings were immortality;  
Its changing mind was time, its heart eternity.  
All opposites were there, unreconciled, unceasing,  
Struggling for victory, by victory unappeased.  
All things it bore, even that which brings undying peace,  
But secret, veiled, waiting for some supreme release.  
I saw the spirit of the cosmic Ignorance;  
I felt its power besiege my gloried fields of trance.

25-4-1934

SRI AUROBINDO

## A HYMN TO AGNI\*

1. With all these gods, O Agni, thou who art the activity of speech, arrive and do thy work.

2. On thee, O Agni, the Kanwas have called, for thee, O master of wisdom, their movements of understanding become articulate; arrive, O Agni, with the gods.

3. On Indra and Vayu, Brihaspati, on Mitra and Agni, Pushana, Bhaga, the Adityas and the Marut host.

4. For you the nectar streams are filled in, rapturous and maddening dripping sweetness, into their vessel they settle down.

5. Thee the Kanwas protected adore, when they have manifested the flame, hold the offering and have set their array.

6. Shining of flank, yoked to the mind the bearers that bear thee and bear to us the gods to drink the Soma wine.

7. Make them active to the Yajna, O Agni, they increase by truth, they have with them their female powers; make them drink the sweetnesses, O keen of tongue.

8. Those that are active to Yajna, those that are adorable, let both of them drink with thy tongue, O Agni, the heady sweetness of the wine.

9. From the world of the lustre of the sun the seer, the priest of the offering bringeth the gods that woke to the dawn.

10. With all of them, O Agni, drink thou the sweetness of the Soma wine, with Indra and Vayu and Mitra's lustres.

11. Thou, the priest of the oblation, thinker and friend, sittest, O Agni, sittest at the Yajnas, therefore do thou set thyself to this action of sacrifice of ours.

12. Yoking, O God, in thy chariot the rosy and the green and the crimson, by these bear hither the gods.

SRI AUROBINDO

\* *Rig Veda* I. 14

<sup>1</sup> Rishi: Medhatithi Kanwa



## THE UPANISHAD IN APHORISMS\*

### THE ISHA UPANISHAD

**F**OR the Lord all this is a habitation whatsoever is moving thing in her that moves.

Why dost thou say there is a world? There is no world, only One who moves.

What thou callest world is the movement of Kali; as such embrace thy world-existence. In thy all-embracing stillness of vision thou art Purusha and inhabitest; in thy outward motion and action thou art Prakriti and the builder of the habitation. Thus envisage thy being.

There are many knots of this movement and each knot thy eyes look upon as an object; many currents and each current thy mind sees as force and tendency. Forces and objects are the forms of Kali.

To each form of her we give a name. What is this name? It is word, it is sound, it is vibration of being, the child of infinity and the father of mental idea. Before form can be, name and idea must have existed.

The half-enlightened say, "Whatever form is built, the Lord enters to inhabit;" but the Seer knows that whatever the Lord sees in His own being, becomes Idea and seeks a form and a habitation.

The universe is a rhythmic vibration in infinite existence which multiplies itself into many harmonies and holds them well ordered in the original type of motion.

Thou lookest upon a stone and sayest, "It is still". So it is, but to the sense-experience only. For the eye that sees, it is built out of motion and composed of motion. In the ordered repetition of the atomic movements that compose it, consists its appearance of stillness.

All stability is a fixed equilibrium of rhythm. Disturb the rhythm, the stability dissolves and becomes unstable.

No single rhythm can be eternally stable; therefore the universe is an ocean always in flow, and everything in it is mutable and transient. Each thing in

\* Old writing

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Nature endures till the purpose of Kali in it is fulfilled; then it is dissolved and changed into a constituent of some other harmony.

Prakriti is eternal, but every universe passes. The fact of universe endures for ever, but no particular world of things can last; for each universe is only one rhythm out of an infinite number of possible movements. Whatsoever system in Nature or of Nature is thoroughly worked out, must give place to a new harmony.

Nevertheless all world and everything in world is eternal in its essential being; for all essential existence is Brahman without end or beginning.

Forms and names are also Brahman and eternal; but, in world, theirs is an eternity of recurrence, not of unbroken persistence. Every form and every idea that has once been, exists still and can again recur; every form or idea that is to be, already exists and was from the beginning. Time is a convention of movement, not a condition of existence.

That which inhabits the forms of Kali is Self and Lord of the Movement. Purusha is master of Prakriti, not her subject; Soul determines Form and Action and is not determined by them. Spirit reflects in its knowledge the activity of Nature, but only those activities which it has itself compelled Nature to initiate.

The soul in the body is master of body and not subject to its laws or limited by its experiences.

The soul is not constituted by mind and its activities, for these also are parts of Nature and movements only.

Mind and body are instruments of the secret all-knowing and omnipotent Self within us.

The soul in the body is not limited in space by the body or in experience by the mind; the whole universe is its habitation.

There is only one Self of things, one soul in multitudinous forms. By body and mind I am separated even from my brother or my lover but by exceeding body and mind I can become one with all things in being and in experience, even with the stone and the tree.

My universal soul need no more be limited by my individual mind and body, than my individual consciousness is limited by the experiences of a single cell in my body. The walls which imprison us have been built up (by) Prakriti in her movement and exist only in her inferior kingdoms. As one rises higher they become conventional boundaries which we can always stride across and, on the summits, they merely mark off compartments in our universal consciousness.



## THE UPANISHAD IN APHORISMS

The soul does not move, but motion of Nature takes place in its perfect stillness.

The motion of Nature is not real or material motion, but vibration of the soul's self-consciousness.

Nature is Chit-Shakti, the Lord's expressive power of self-awareness, by which whatever He sees in Himself, becomes in form of consciousness.

Everything in Nature is a becoming of the one Spirit who alone is Being. We and all things in Nature are God's becomings, *sarvabhūtāni*.

Although there are to world-experience multitudinous souls (Purushas) in the universe, all these are only one Purusha masked in many forms of His consciousness.

Each soul in itself is God entirely, every group of souls is collectively God; the modalities of Nature's movement create their separation and outward differences.

God transcends world and is not bound by any law of Nature. He uses laws, laws do not use Him.

God transcends world and is not bound to any particular state of consciousness in the world. He is not unity-consciousness nor multiple consciousness, not Personality nor Impersonality, not stillness nor motion, but simultaneously includes all these self-expressions of His absolute being.

God simultaneously transcends world, contains it and informs it; the soul in the body can arrive at the God-consciousness and at once transcend, contain and inform its universe.

God-consciousness is not exclusive of World-consciousness; Nature is not an outcast from Spirit, but its Image, world is not a falsity contradicting Brahman, but the symbol of a divine Existence.

God is the reverse side of Nature, Nature the obverse side of God.

Since the soul in the body is eternally and inalienably free, its bondage to egoism, law of bodily nature, law of mental nature, law of pleasure and pain, law of life and death, can only be an apparent and not a real bondage. Our chains are either a play or an illusion or both play and illusion.

The secret of our apparent bondage is the Spirit's play by which It consents to forget God-consciousness in the absorption of Nature's movement.

The movement of Nature is a sevenfold flow, each stream subject to its own law of motion but containing latent, expressed or half-apparent in itself its six sisters or companions.

Nature is composed of Being, Will or Force, Creative Bliss, Pure Idea,

## THE ADVENT

Mind, Life and Matter,—Sat, Chit or Tapas, Ananda, Vijnanam, Manas, Prana and Annam.

The Soul, Purusha, can seat itself in any of these principles and, according to its situation, its outlook changes and it sees a different world; all world is merely arranged and harmonised outlook of the Spirit.

What God sees, that exists; what He sees with order and harmony, becomes a world.

There are seven worlds, Satya, of pure being, Tapas, of pure will or force, Jana, of pure delight, Mahas, of pure idea, Swara, of pure mentality, Bhuvah, of pure vitality, Bhuh, of pure matter.

The soul in Sat is pure truth of being and perceives itself as one in the world's multiplicity.

The soul in Tapas is pure force of divine will and knowledge and possesses universe omnisciently and omnipotently as its extended self.

The soul in Ananda is pure delight and multiplies itself in universal self-creation and unmixed joy of being.

The soul in Mahas is pure idea, perceives itself in order and arrangement of comprehensive unity in multiplicity, all things in their unity and each thing in its right place, time and circumstance. It is not subject to the tyranny of impressions, but contains and comprehends the objects it knows.

The soul in Manas is pure mentality and receives the pure impression of separate objects and from their sum receives the impression of the whole. It is Manas that measures, limits and divides.

The soul in Prana is pure vitality and pours itself out in various life energy.

The soul in Annam is pure matter and forgets force of consciousness in the form of consciousness.

Matter is the lowest rung of the ladder and the soul that has descended into Matter tends by its secret nature and inevitable self-impulsion to reemerge out of form towards the freedom of pure universal being. These are the two movements that govern world-existence, *adhogati*, the descent towards matter or mere form and *urdhwagati*, the ascent towards Spirit and God.

Man is a mental being, manu or manomaya purusha, who has entered into a vitalised material body and is seeking to make it capable of infinite mentality, infinite ideality so that it may become the perfect instrument, seat and temple of the manifest Sachchidananda.



Mind in the material world is attentive to two kinds of knowledge, impacts from outside, corporeal or mental, received into the individual mentality and translated into mental values and knowledge from within, spiritual, ideal or mental similarly translated.

Inert physical bodies receive all the impacts that the mind receives, but being devoid of organised mentality, retain them only in the involved mind in matter and are incapable of translating them into mental symbols.

Our bodies are naturally inert physical bodies moved by life and mind. They also receive all impacts, but not all of them are translated into mental values. Of those which are translated, some are rendered imperfectly, some perfectly, some immediately, some only after a longer or shorter incubation in the involved mind in matter. There are the same variable phenomena with the internal knowledge. All the knowledge translated here into mental values forms the stuff of our waking consciousness. This waking consciousness accepted by the *manomaya* Purusha as itself and organised round a central I-sense is the waking ego.

The jiva or embodied mental being is in its consciousness much wider than the waking ego; it has a wide range of knowledge and experience of the past, present and future, the near and the distant, this life and other lives, this world and other worlds which is not available to the waking ego. The waking ego fails to notice many things and forgets what it notices; the jiva notices and remembers all experiences.

That which goes on in our life-energy and bodies below the level of waking mind is our subconscious self in the world; that which goes on in our mind and higher principles above the level of our waking mind is our super-conscious self. The waking ego often receives intimations, more or less obscure, from either source which it fails to trace to their origin.

Man progresses in proportion as he widens his consciousness and renders ever wider and finer experiences available for the perception and delight of the waking consciousness and in proportion as he can ascend to higher reaches of mind and beyond mind to ideality and spirit.

The swiftest and most effective means of his advance and self-fulfilment is to dissolve his waking ego into the enjoyment of an infinite consciousness, at first mental of the universal *manomaya* Purusha, but afterwards ideal and spiritual of the high Vijnana and highest Sachchidananda.

The transcendence and dissolution of the waking mental ego in the body is therefore the first object of all practical Vedanta.

This transcendence and dissolution may result either in loss of the

waking self and relapse into some sleep-bound principle, undifferentiated Prakriti, Sushupta Purusha, Sunyam Brahma (Nihil), etc. or in loss of the world self in Parabrahman or in universalisation of the waking self and the joy of God's divine being in and beyond the world, Amritam. The last is the goal proposed for man by the Isha Upanishad.

The waking ego, identifying the Jiva with its body, vital and mental experiences which are part of the stream of Nature's movement and subject to Nature and the process of the movement, falsely believes the soul to be the subject of Nature and not its lord, *aniśa* and not *iśa*. This is the illusion of bondage which the *manomaya* Purusha either accepts or seeks to destroy. Those who accept it are called *baddha* Jivas, souls in bondage; those who seek to destroy it, *munukṣu* Jivas, self-liberating souls; those who have destroyed it are *mukta* Jivas, souls free from illusion and limitation.

In reality, no soul is bound and therefore none seeking liberation or liberated from bondage; these are all conditions of the waking mind and not of the self or spirit which is Isha, eternally lord and free.

The essence of bondage is limitation and the chief circumstances of limitation are death, suffering and ignorance.

Death, suffering and ignorance are circumstances of the mind in the vitalised body and do not touch the consciousness of the soul in vijñāna, ananda, chit and sat. The combination of the three lower members, mind, life and body, is called therefore *aparārdha*, the lower kingdom or in Christian parlance the kingdom of death and sin, the four higher members are called *parārdha*, the higher kingdom, or in Christian parlance, the kingdom of heaven. To liberate man from death, suffering and ignorance and impose the all-blissful and luminous nature of the higher kingdom upon the lower is the object of the Seer in the Isha Upanishad.

This liberation is to be effected by dissolving the waking ego into the Lord's divine being and experiencing entirely our unity with all other existences and with Him who is God, Atman and Brahman.

All individual existences are jagat in jagati, object of motion in stream of motion and obey the laws and processes of that motion.

Body is an object of motion in the stream of material consciousness of which the principal law is birth and death. All bodies are subject therefore to formation and dissolution.

Life is a current of motion in the stream of vital consciousness composed of eternal life-energy. Life is not itself subject to death,—death no



## THE UPANISHAD IN APHORISMS

being a law of life-energy,—but only to expulsion from the form which it occupies and therefore to the physical experience of death of its body.

All matter here is filled with life-energy of a greater or less intensity of action, but the organisation of life in individual animation begins later in the process of the material world by the appearance first of the plant, then of the animal. This evolution of life is caused and supported by the pressure of the gods of the Bhuvār or Life-world upon Bhu.

Life entering into body is dominated partly by the laws of body; it is therefore unable to impart its own full and uninterrupted energy to its form. Consequently there is no physical immortality.

The organisation of individual animated life tends to hasten the period of dissolution by introducing shocks of an intensity of force alien to matter which wastes the material form by its activity. Therefore the plant dissolves while the stone and metal endure in their own equilibrium.

Mind entering into the vitalised body tends still farther to hasten the period of dissolution by the higher demands of its vibrations upon the body.

Mind is a knot of motion in the stream of mental consciousness. Like life, it is not itself subject to death, but only to expulsion from the vitalised body it has occupied. But because the mental ego identifies itself with the body and understands by its life only this residence in its present perishable gross corporeal body, therefore it has the mental experience of a bodily death.

The experience of death is therefore combined of the apparently mortal mind's ignorance of its own true immortal nature and of the limitation of energy in the body by which the form we inhabit wears out under the shocks of vibrating life-energy and vibrating mentality. We mean by death not dissolution of life or of mind, but dissolution of the form or body.

The dissolution of body is not true death for the mental being called man; it is only a change of media and of the surroundings of consciousness. Matter of body changes its constituents and groupings, mental being persists both in essence and personality and passes into other forms and environments.

SRI AUROBINDO

## NOTES ON BERGSON

BERGSON—"philosophy of change",

"It symbolises the protest of the modern impatient man of action against the great Platonic tradition in philosophy of reason or intellect and static reality."

"It substitutes force for inertia, life for death and liberty for fatalism."

"Physics and logic are appropriate to the study of the inverse movement, matter, which is life or *elan vital* pulverised and its method is intellect and logic."

"Philosophy is the study of becoming in general and its method is intuition."

"Scrap the Platonic tradition and follow Plotinus 'Ask me not but understand in silence as I (Nature) am silent and am not wont to speak'."

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"A philosophy of evolution itself evolving", "positive and empirical"

"moulded on experience, determined to base itself on solid grounds, a doctrine in no sense systematic, distinguishes different problems to examine them one by one...enemy of conventionality...antidote to the dogmatic finality of the traditional philosopher."

A short-cut through "the turning of the mind homeward, the coincidence of the human consciousness with the living principle"

"the destiny of man will be realised because it is the nature of the *elan vital* to triumph over matter and environment."

The office of intellect is not to fathom reality, but to fabricate and preside over action...intellect cannot comprehend life and reality. Intellect (logic) goes round the object, intuition enters into the object; one stops at the (absolute), the other enters into the absolute.

A philosophy of change? But what is change? In ordinary parlance change means passage from one condition to another and that would seem to impl



passage from one status to another status. The shoot changes into a tree, passes from the status of shoot to the status of tree and there it stops; man passes from the status of young man to the status of old man and the only farther change possible to him is death or dissolution of his status. So it would seem that change is not something isolated which is the sole original and eternal reality, but it is something dependent on status, and if status were non-existent, change also could not exist. For we have to ask, when you speak of change as alone real, change of what, from what, to what? Without this "what" change could not be.

Change is evidently the change of some form or state of existence from one condition to another condition. Otherwise, what is it? To it itself fundamental and absolute, not explicable or definable by any other term than itself, perceivable and intelligible as the sole reality by a naked intuition which feels and cries out "Change, reality" and then falls dumb and can say no more?

An object changes, a person changes, a condition of things changes. But can it be said that the object is no real object but only a continuity of change, or that a person is not a person but a continuity of change, a condition of things is not a condition and there are no things but there is only a continuity of change? This seems to be an illustration of the besetting sin of metaphysics—to exalt a word into a reality or an idea into a reality without fathoming what is the reality which it tries to indicate. For to label with a word or a name is not to fathom and to define, to erect a concept is not to fathom. Fathom for us then what is change before you ask us to accept it as the only reality. You may say "I have fathomed it, I have seen it to be the one constant real, but do not ask me to define what it is; listen rather in silence to the silence of Nature and you too will fathom." But what if so listening, I fathom other realities than change—let us say, immutable being as well as mutable force, status as well as change? To prevent that you plunge into speech and not silence, into dialectics of the intellect instead of the undebatable certitudes of intuition, and so abandon your own methodology. If intuition alone is to be used, then you must give a place to my intuition as well as yours, and all, however contradictory in appearance, must stand until a greater intuition comes in to put all in their place, reconcile, include in a consistent whole.

In the world of our experience contradictories often complement and are necessary to each other's existence. Change is possible only if there is a status from which to change; but status again exists only as a step that

## THE ADVENT

pauses, a step in the continuous passage of change or a step on which change pauses before it passes into another step in its creative passage. And behind this relation is a duality of eternal status and eternal motion and behind this duality is something that is neither status nor change but contains both as its aspects—and That is likely to be the true Reality.

SRI AUROBINDO

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Tangled is the way of works in the world. When Rama the Avatar murdered Vali or Krishna, who was God Himself, assassinated, to liberate his nation, his tyrant uncle Kamsa, who shall say whether they did good or did evil? But this we can feel that they acted divinely.

SRI AUROBINDO



## THE DEVIL'S MASTIFF

(A STORY)

THERE had been a heavy fall throughout the whole of that December day. The roads were white and indistinguishable in a thick pall of moonlight and dazzling snow; here and there a drift betrayed the footing. In the sky a bright moon pursued by clouds ran timidly up the ascent of the firmament; great arms of darkness sometimes closed over it; sometimes it emerged and proceeded with its still luminous race, ran, swayed, floated, glided forward intently, unfalteringly. Patrick Curran, treading uncautiously the white uncertain flooring of earth, stumbling into snowdrifts, scouting into temporary darkness for his right road, cursed the weather and his fortunes.

"It is not enough" he complained, "that I should be a proscribed fugitive hiding my head in every uncertain refuge from the pursuit of this devil's Cromwell, doomed already to the gallows, owing my life every day to the trembling compassion of my poor father's tenants; it is not enough that I should have lost Alicia and that Luke Walter should have her; but the very moon and the snow and the night are his allies against me. Since God is so hard on me, I wonder why the devil does not come to my help—I would sell my soul to him this moment willingly. But perhaps he too is afraid of Cromwell."

"It is hardly probable," said a voice at his side suddenly.

Patrick Curran turned with a fierce start and clutched at his dagger. He was aware in the darkness of a dim form pacing beside him with a step much quieter and more assured than his own.

"Who are you?" he cried, rigid and menacing.

"A wayfarer like yourself," said the other, "I travel earth as a fugitive."

"From whom or what?" asked Patrick.

"How shall I say?" said the shadow, "Perhaps from my own thoughts, perhaps from a too powerful enemy."

After the discovery of the recent conspiracy to murder Cromwell and restore Charles Stuart, the country was full of Royalist fugitives, hiding by

day, travelling by night, in the hope of reaching a port whence they could sail for Ostende or Calais. For the inquisitions of the Republican magistrates were imperative and indiscriminating.

"I would give", he said to himself, "my soul and the rest of my allotted days as a free gift to Satan, if I might once clasp Alicia in my arms and take with me into Hell the warm sense of the joy of her body and if I might see Luke Walter dead before me or be sure he was following me. Oh if I can once be sure of that, let the brown dog of the Dacres leap on me the next moment, I care not."

"You may be sure of it," answered the voice at his side, strangely sweet, yet to Patrick's ear formidable. He turned, thrilling.

"You must be the devil himself", he almost shouted.

"I may be only one who can read your thoughts", said the other in that sweet sinister voice which made the young man fancy sometimes that a woman spoke to him. "And that I can, you will easily judge when I have told you a very little of what I know of you. You are Patrick, the second son of Sir Gerald Curran who got his estate from his wife, Margaret Dacre, his baronetcy from King James and his death from Cromwell who took him prisoner at Worcester and hanged him. You were to have married Lady Alicia Nevil, when the conspiracy of which you were one of the heads as well as the hand destined to strike down the Puritan tyrant, was discovered by the discernment, luck and ruthless skill of Colonel Luke Walter."

The young Cavalier started and uttered a furious imprecation.

"It was he," said the other, "he has great brain-power and penetration and a resolute genius. It is even possible he may succeed Cromwell, if the God of the Puritans gives him a lease long enough."

"If I have the chance, I will shorten it," cried Patrick Curran.

"Or I;" said the unknown, "for just now I too am a Royalist. But to proceed. You were proclaimed and doomed to a felon's death in your absence; the Earl, implicated in the conspiracy, was compelled as the price of his pardon to betroth his daughter to Luke Walter, and the marriage is fixed for tonight."

"Tonight!" groaned the young man, and he smote his thigh miserably with his hand.

"At the Church of Worndale."

"But will it matter if Luke Walter perishes before he has consummated his nuptials?"

"I promise you that," said the unknown. "It does not suit you that

Alicia should marry another. It does not suit me that there should be a strong successor to Cromwell. Charles Stuart is my good friend, and I wish that he should rule England. Therefore, Patrick, it is a bargain."

"Who the devil are you?" cried the young man again, marvelling.

As if to answer the moon peeped out from between two heavy angry masses of black cloud, illumining the earth's intense and inclement whiteness. He saw beside him a young man of remarkable beauty, whose face was perfectly familiar, but his name could not be remembered.

"As for your soul and your life," said the stranger, and as their eyes met, Patrick shuddered, "you need not give them to the devil whether freely or as part of the bargain, for they are already his."

He laughed a laugh of terrible and ominous sweetness, and in a moment Patrick remembered. He knew that laugh, he knew that face. They were his own.

At that moment the moon passed away into the second fragment of cloud. Patrick stood, unable to speak, looking at the dim shadow in front of him. Then it vanished.

It was some time before the young man could command himself sufficiently to pursue his way. He tried to think for a moment that it was John Dacre, the illegitimate son of Sir Gerald by his sister-in-law Matilda Dacre, who resembled Patrick strongly and was his sworn comrade and lover. But he knew it was not John. That was not John's face or John's speech or John's thinking. It must have been a vivid dream or a waking illusion. He walked forward in the darkness, greatly disturbed, but with recovered courage.

Again the moon shone out, this time with a clear gulf of sky just in front of her. Before Patrick the white road stretched long, straight and visible to a great distance and was marked out here by a high snow-covered hedge from the equally white indistinguishable country around.

"Come now, that is better," said Patrick Curran. As he spoke, he saw far off on the road a dark object travelling towards him; he slackened his pace and was minded to turn off the road to avoid it. But it was approaching with phenomenal speed. As it came nearer, he saw that it was only a dog. Again Patrick stood still. A dog! There was nothing in that. It was not what he had feared. But he remembered that singular conversation and the impious prayer that had arisen in his heart about the brown Dog of the Dacres,—the dog which showed itself always when a Dacre was about to die and leaped on him whenever the doom was by violence. He smiled, but a little uncertainly. Then the moonlight seemed to dwell on



the swiftly-travelling animal more intensely and he saw that it was brown.

Never had Patrick seen any earthly thing master of such a terrible speed. It ran, it galloped, it bounded, and the wretched man watching the terrific charge of that phantasmal monster,—for it was a gigantic mastiff,—felt his heart stop and his warm youthful blood congeal in his veins. It was now within twenty paces; he felt the huge eyes upon him and knew that it was going to leap. He went down heavily with the ponderous frame of the animal oppressing his breast, its leonine paws on his shoulders, its hot breathing moistening his face. And then there was nothing.

That was the most terrible part of it, to have been borne down physically by a semblance, an unearthly hallucination, a thing that was this moment and the next was not. Patrick struggled to his feet, overcome by a panic terror; his nerves cried to him to run, to travel away quickly from this accursed night and this road of ghastly encounters. But he felt as if hamstrung, helpless, clutched by an intangible destruction. He sat down on the snow, panted and waited.

After a few minutes the blood began to flow more quietly through his veins, the pounding of his heart slackened and the sick agitation of his nerves yielded to a sudden fiery inrush. He leaped furiously to his feet. "The Dog of the Dacres" he cried, "the brown Dog, the Devil's Mastiff! And no doubt it was his master (who) spoke to me in my own semblance. I am doomed, then. But not to the gallows. No, by God, not to the gallows. God's doom and the devil's, since I can resist neither, but not man's, not Cromwell's!" Then he paused. "Tonight!" he cried again. "At Worndale Church! But I will see her once before I go down to Hell. And it may be I shall take Luke Walter with me. It may be that is what the Devil wants of me."

He looked about the landscape and thought he could distinguish the trees that bordered the distant Church of Worndale. That was in front of him. Also in front, but much more to the left, was Trevesham Hall, the home of Alicia Nevil. He began walking rapidly, no longer with his first cautious and doubtful treading, but with a bold reckless stride. And it was noticeable that he no longer stumbled or floundered into snowdrifts. Patrick knew that he had only a few brief inches of his life's road left to his treading; for no man of the Dacre blood had ever lived more than twenty four hours after the Brown Dog leaped on him. A desperate courage had entered into his veins. He would see

(*Incomplete*)

SRI AUROBINDO

# THE YOGA OF INTEGRAL KNOWLEDGE\*

## CHAPTER II

### THE STATUS OF KNOWLEDGE

THE Self, the Divine, the Supreme Reality, the All, the Transcendent,—the One in all these aspects is then the object of Yogic knowledge. Ordinary objects, the external appearances of life and matter, the psychology of our thoughts and actions, the perception of the forces of the apparent world can be part of this knowledge, but only in so far as it is part of the manifestation of the One. It becomes at once evident that the knowledge for which Yoga strives must be different from what men ordinarily understand by the word. For we mean ordinarily by knowledge an intellectual appreciation of the facts of life, mind and matter and the laws that govern them. This is a knowledge founded upon our sense-perception and upon reasoning from our sense-perceptions and it is undertaken partly for the pure satisfaction of the intellect, partly for practical efficiency and the added power which knowledge gives in managing our lives and the lives of others, in utilising for human ends the overt or secret forces of Nature and in helping or hurting, in saving and ennobling or in oppressing and destroying our fellow-men. Yoga, indeed, is commensurate with all life and can include all these subjects and objects. There is even a Yoga<sup>1</sup> which can be used for self-indulgence as well as for self-conquest, for hurting others as well as for their salvation. But “all life” includes not only, not even mainly life as humanity now leads it. It envisages rather and regards as its one true object a higher truly conscious existence which our half-conscious humanity does not yet possess and can only arrive at by a self-exceeding spiritual ascension. It is this greater con-

\* *Synthesis of Yoga*, Chapter XIV (*Arya* Vol. II). Revised by Sri Aurobindo.

<sup>1</sup> Yoga develops power, it develops it even when we do not desire or consciously aim at it; and power is always a double-edged weapon which can be used to hurt or destroy as well as to help and save. Be it also noted that all destruction is not evil.

## THE ADVENT

sciousness and higher existence which is the peculiar and appropriate object of Yogic discipline.

This greater consciousness, this higher existence are not an enlightened or illumined mentality supported by a greater dynamic energy or supporting a purer moral life and character. Their superiority to the ordinary human consciousness is not in degree but in kind and essence. There is a change not merely of the surface or instrumental manner of our being but of its very foundation and dynamic principle. Yogic knowledge seeks to enter into a secret consciousness beyond mind which is only occultly here, concealed at the bases of all existence. For it is that consciousness alone that truly knows and only by its possession can we possess God and rightly know the world and its real nature and secret forces. All this world visible or sensible to us and all too in it that is not visible is merely the phenomenal expression of something beyond the mind and the senses. The knowledge which the senses and intellectual reasoning from the data of the senses can bring us, is not true knowledge; it is a science of appearances. And even appearances cannot be properly known unless we know first the Reality of which they are images. This Reality is their self and there is one self of all; when that is seized, all other things can then be known in their truth and no longer as now only in their appearance.

It is evident that however much we may analyse the physical and sensible, we cannot by that means arrive at the Knowledge of the Self or of ourselves or of that which we call God. The telescope, the microscope, the scalpel, the retort and alembic cannot go beyond the physical, although they may arrive at subtler and subtler truths about the physical. If then we confine ourselves to what the senses and their physical aids reveal to us and refuse from the beginning to admit any other reality or any other means of knowledge, we are obliged to conclude that nothing is real except the physical and that there is no Self in us or in the universe, no God within and without, no ourselves even except this aggregate of brain, nerves and body. But this we are only obliged to conclude because we have assumed it firmly from the beginning and therefore cannot but circle round to our original assumption.

If, then, there is a Self, a Reality not obvious to the senses, it must be by other means than those of physical Science that it is to be sought and known. The intellect is not that means. Undoubtedly there are a number of supra-sensuous truths at which the intellect is able to arrive in its own manner and which it is able to perceive and state as intellectual conceptions. The very idea of Force for instance on which Science so much insists, is a conception,



a truth at which the intellect alone can arrive by going beyond its data; for we do not sense this universal force but only its results, and the force itself we infer as a necessary cause of these results. So also the intellect by following a certain line of rigorous analysis can arrive at the intellectual conception and the intellectual conviction of the Self and this conviction can be very real, very luminous, very potent as the beginning of other and greater things. Still, in itself intellectual analysis can only lead to an arrangement of clear conceptions, perhaps to a right arrangement of true conceptions; but this is not the knowledge aimed at by Yoga. For it is not in itself an effective knowledge. A man may be perfect in it and yet be precisely what he was before except in the mere fact of the greater intellectual illumination. The change of our being at which Yoga aims, may not at all take place.

It is true that intellectual deliberation and right discrimination are an important part of the Yoga of knowledge; but their object is rather to remove a difficulty than to arrive at the final and positive result of this path. Our ordinary intellectual notions are a stumbling-block in the way of knowledge; for they are governed by the error of the senses and they found themselves on the notion that matter and body are the reality, that life and force are the reality, that passion and emotion, thought and sense are the reality; and with these things we identify ourselves, and because we identify ourselves with these things we cannot get back to the real self. Therefore, it is necessary for the seeker of knowledge to remove this stumbling block and to get right notions about himself and the world; for how shall we pursue by knowledge the real self if we have no notion of what it is and are on the contrary burdened with ideas quite opposite to the truth? Therefore right thought is a necessary preliminary, and once the habit of right thought is established, free from sense-error and desire and old association and intellectual pre-judgment, the understanding becomes purified and offers no serious obstacle to the farther process of knowledge. Still, right thought only becomes effective when in the purified understanding it is followed by other operations, by vision, by experience, by realisation.

What are these operations? They are not mere psychological self-analysis and self-observation. Such analysis, such observation are, like the process of right thought, of immense value and practically indispensable. They may even, if rightly pursued, lead to a right thought of considerable power and effectivity. Like intellectual discrimination by the process of meditative thought they will have an effect of purification; they will lead to self-knowledge of a certain kind and to the setting right of the disorders of the soul

and the heart and even of the disorders of the understanding. Self-knowledge of all kinds is on the straight path to the knowledge of the real Self. The Upanishad tells us that the Self-existent has so set the doors of the soul that they turn outwards and most men look outward into the appearances of things; only the rare soul that is ripe for a calm thought and steady wisdom turns its eye inward, sees the Self and attains to immortality. To this turning of the eye inward psychological self-observation and analysis is a great and effective introduction. We can look into the inward of ourselves more easily than we can look into the inward of things external to us because there, in things outside us, we are in the first place embarrassed by the form and secondly we have no natural previous experience of that in them which is other than their physical substance. A purified or tranquillised mind may reflect or a powerful concentration may discover God in the world, the Self in Nature even before it is realised in ourselves, but this is rare and difficult.<sup>1</sup> And it is only in ourselves that we can observe and know the process of the Self in its becoming and follow the process by which it draws back into self-being. Therefore the ancient counsel, know thyself, will always stand as the first word that directs us towards *the* knowledge. Still, psychological self-knowledge is only the experience of the modes of the Self, it is not the realisation of the Self in its pure being.

The status of knowledge, then, which Yoga envisages is not merely an intellectual conception or clear discrimination of the truth, nor is it an enlightened psychological experience of the modes of our being. It is a "realisation," in the full sense of the word; it is the making real to ourselves and in ourselves of the Self, the transcendent and universal Divine, and it is the subsequent impossibility of viewing the modes of being except in the light of that Self and in their true aspect as its flux of becoming under the psychological and physical conditions of our world-existence. This realisation consists of three successive movements, internal vision, complete internal experience and identity.

This internal vision, *dr̥ṣṭi*, the power so highly valued by the ancient sages, the power which made a man a Rishi or Kavi and no longer a mere thinker, is a sort of light in the soul by which things unseen become as evident and real to it—to the soul and not merely to the intellect—as do

<sup>1</sup> In one respect, however, it is easier, because in external things we are not so much hampered by the sense of the limited ego as in ourselves; one obstacle to the realisation of God is therefore removed.

things seen to the physical eye. In the physical world there are always two forms of knowledge, the direct and the indirect, *pratyakṣa*, of that which is present to the eyes, and *parokṣa*, of that which is remote from and beyond our vision. When the object is beyond our vision, we are necessarily obliged to arrive at an idea of it by inference, imagination, analogy, by hearing the descriptions of others who have seen it or by studying pictorial or other representations of it if these are available. By putting together all these aids we can indeed arrive at a more or less adequate idea or suggestive image of the object, but we do not realise the thing itself; it is not yet to us the grasped reality, but only our conceptual representation of a reality. But once we have seen it with the eyes,—for no other sense is adequate,—we possess, we realise; it is there secure in our satisfied being, part of ourselves in knowledge. Precisely the same rule holds good of psychical things and of the Self. We may hear clear and luminous teachings about the Self from philosophers or teachers or from ancient writings; we may by thought, inference, imagination, analogy or by any other available means attempt to form a mental figure or conception of it; we may hold firmly that conception in our mind and fix it by an entire and exclusive concentration;<sup>1</sup> but we have not yet realised it, we have not seen God. It is only when after long and persistent concentration or by other means the veil of the mind is rent or swept aside, only when a flood of light breaks over the awakened mentality, *jyotirmaya Brahman*, and conception gives place to a knowledge-vision in which the Self is as present, real, concrete as a physical object to the physical eye, that we possess in knowledge; for we have seen. After that revelation, whatever fadings of the light, whatever periods of darkness may afflict the soul, it can never irretrievably lose what it has once held. The experience is inevitably renewed and must become more frequent till it is constant; when and how soon depends on the devotion and persistence with which we insist on the path and besiege by our will or our love the hidden Deity.

This inner vision is one form of psychological experience; but the inner experience is not confined to that seeing; vision only opens, it does not embrace. Just as the eye, though it is alone adequate to bring the first sense of realisation, has to call in the aid of experience by the touch and other organs of sense before there is an embracing knowledge, so the vision

<sup>1</sup> This is the idea of the triple operation of Jñānayoga, *śravaṇa*, *manana*, *nididhyāśana*, hearing, thinking or mentalising and fixing in concentration.



of the self ought to be completed by an experience of it in all our members. Our whole being ought to demand God and not only our illumined eye of knowledge. For since each principle in us is only a manifestation of the Self, each can get back to its reality and have the experience of it. We can have a mental experience of the Self and seize as concrete realities all those apparently abstract things that to the mind constitute existence—consciousness, force, delight and their manifold forms and workings: thus the mind is satisfied of God. We can have an emotional experience of the Self through Love and through emotional delight, love and delight of the Self in us, of the Self in the universal and of the Self in all with whom we have relations: thus the heart is satisfied of God. We can have an aesthetic experience of the Self in beauty, a delight-perception and taste of the absolute reality all-beautiful in everything whether created by ourselves or Nature in its appeal to the aesthetic mind and the senses; thus the sense is satisfied of God. We can have even the vital, nervous experience and practically the physical sense of the Self in all life and formation and in all workings of powers, forces, energies that operate through us or others or in the world: thus the life and the body are satisfied of God.

All this knowledge and experience are primary means of arriving at and of possessing identity. It is our self that we see and experience and therefore vision and experience are incomplete unless they culminate in identity, unless we are able to live in all our being the supreme Vedantic knowledge, He am I. We must not only see God and embrace Him, but become that Reality. We must become one with the Self in its transcendence of all form and manifestation by the resolution, the sublimation, the escape from itself of ego and all its belongings into That from which they proceed, as well as become the Self in all its manifested existences and becomings, one with it in the infinite existence, consciousness, peace, delight by which it reveals itself in us and one with it in the action, formation, play of self-conception with which it garbs itself in the world.

It is difficult for the modern mind to understand how we can do more than conceive intellectually of the Self or of God; but it may borrow some shadow of this vision, experience and becoming from that inner awakening to Nature which a great English poet has made a reality to the European imagination. If we read the poems in which Wordsworth expressed his realisation of Nature, we may acquire some distant idea of what realisation is. For, first, we see that he had the vision of something in the world which is the very Self of all things that it contains, a conscious force and presence

other than its forms, yet cause of its forms and manifested in them. We perceive that he had not only the vision of this and the joy and peace and universality which its presence brings, but the very sense of it, mental, aesthetic, vital, physical; not only this sense and vision of it in its own being but in the nearest flower and simplest man and the immobile rock; and, finally, that he even occasionally attained to that unity, that becoming the object of his dedication, one phase of which is powerfully and profoundly expressed in the poem "A slumber did my spirit seal," where he describes himself as become one in his being with earth, "rolled round in its diurnal course with stocks and stones and trees." Exalt this realisation to a profounder Self than physical Nature and we have the elements of the Yogic knowledge. But all this experience is only the vestibule to that suprasensuous, supramental realisation of the Transcendent who is beyond all His aspects, and the final summit of knowledge can only be attained by entering into the superconscient and there merging all other experience into a supernal unity with the Ineffable. That is the culmination of all divine knowing; that also is the source of all divine delight and divine living.

That status of knowledge is then the aim of this path and indeed of all paths when pursued to their end, to which intellectual discrimination and conception and all concentration and psychological self-knowledge and all seeking by the heart through love and by the senses through beauty and by the will through power and works and by the soul through peace and joy are only keys, avenues, first approaches and beginnings of the ascent which we have to use and to follow till the wide and infinite levels are attained and the divine doors swing open into the infinite Light.

SRI AUROBINDO

## THE NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE

THE new-year messages, for those who know the source from which they come and study their significance and relation to the changing conditions of human life, have always been of the greatest importance. During the last war they were virtual prophecies of the essential trends of world affairs and gave a definite direction to the spiritual aspiration and discipline of those who seek the Divine and His reign upon earth. When all was dark and the forces of disorder and disintegration ran riot in human society, they pointed a finger of light towards the horizons that were blushing with the coming dawn, and breathed not only hope and faith, but courage and certitude into many a drooping heart. They always suggest the right attitude one should take in regard to the happenings of the world and the right perspective in which one should view them, and impart a spiritual force not only to sustain but also to lead us through the tides of the times.

Before trying to understand what the message of this new year means to convey, let us for a brief moment cast a glance at the message of the last year:

Lord, Thou hast told us:  
Do not give way, hold tight.  
It is when everything seems  
lost that all is saved."

The Divine inculcated an utmost constancy of faith and tenacity in that crucial hour of the life of humanity, and a promise of safety was held out as a gleam of light beyond the darkness of the tunnel through which man was passing.

This year's message is couched in an altogether different key and suggests a different context and climate of applicability. It runs:

My Lord, here is Thy advice to all, for this year:  
"Never boast about anything,  
Let your acts speak for you".



The message implies an era of "acts", of achievements, of conquests for the Divine. But that the "acts" may not be frustrated or stultified, it is essential that there should be no vaunting, no egoistic self-glorification either at their beginning or at the end. The very injunction not to vaunt presupposes occasions and objects of vaunting. The message suggests that there will be occasions, probably abundant occasions, for vaunting; there may be solid achievements of far-reaching consequences, signal successes in the war of Light against the forces of darkness; but the soldiers of the Light must not forget, like the gods in the Kena Upanishad, to offer the glory of the victory to the Divine, and feel grateful for it. Their devotion to the Divine should be reflected in their acts and not blazoned in their vaunts.

Vaunts are extremely harmful for two reasons: First, they seriously impede the Divine's work by feeding the separative ego of the worker. The essential condition of divine work being a state of consciousness purged of all taint of the ego and totally surrendered to the divine Force, nothing can be more harmful than vaunts, for they are a self-assertion of the ego and a cause of its greater alienation from the Divine. When one vaunts, it is only as a little, limited, ignorant individual that one does so. A finite individual, vaunting of his finite and fleeting achievements—however glamorous they may be in the eyes of the world—betrays his blindness to the Infinite to whom he owes them as well as his own being and becoming. And how can one who is blind to the truth of his own being become a servant of the Divine and a soldier of His Light? Vaunts are the progeny of a petty consciousness and a prolific source of obscurity and incapacity.

The second reason is occult, and none the less important. According to occult knowledge perfect secrecy should be observed about one's important undertakings till they are accomplished. To speak about them is to give them a material expression, which serves as a handle for the forces of darkness to invest and thwart them.<sup>1</sup> These forces abound in the world atmosphere, and are bent upon defeating all our upward endeavours or falsify their results. They are conscious forces, beings of the lower vital or subtle physical type, that revel in our failures and disappointments, and stubbornly

<sup>1</sup> .....These discussions usually bring on the sadhak a stress of the opposing atmosphere and cannot be helpful to his progress. Reserve is the best attitude...

Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother.

oppose all movements that tend to ameliorate human conditions. So long as our plans and projects move on the mental plane and are not expressed in words, these beings cannot get at them; it is only when they are expressed in words that they pounce upon them and strive to frustrate them by putting obstacles in their way or creating adverse circumstances.

If a mere verbal expression is fraught with such dangers, it goes without saying that a vaunt or boast is a blatant challenge and provocation to these forces, besides entailing, as we have said, a magnification of the ego and an obscuration of consciousness. All high endeavours must be undertaken in silence and humility of spirit, as an offering to the Divine; and when they are accomplished, their results too must be offered to Him; for, it is His Force alone that makes all accomplishments possible.

The message is addressed to all who seek and follow the Mother's guidance in their lives. It has at once an individual and a collective appeal; but the collective appeal carries in it a subtle and considerable significance. It does not take an exceptional development of the yogic consciousness to detect and reject a movement of egoistic pride or vanity when it rises in us in connection with our personal achievements, but when we vaunt about a collective body or an institution to which we belong, the vaunt seems not only justifiable but even laudable and desirable. Our individual ego feels a comfortable sense of exaltation and glory in identifying itself with the collective ego, hardly suspecting that, except for the wider orbit in which it then finds itself, it remains essentially the same—unaltered in its blindness and closed to the Infinite. All egoism must be discarded, individual and collective, if the Divine's work has to be properly accomplished. Like individual humility, there should be also a sincere collective humility before the Divine, so that unhampered by human limitations, His Force may work freely for the fulfilment of His Will in the world. Absolute loyalty there must be to the institution to which one belongs, and an unreserved self-consecration to the ideal it represents; but no vaunt or vainglory, no arrogation to oneself or to one's group of the credit of its achievements; for, all credit should go to the supreme Mother who presides over and guides the institution, which is but a developing centre of Her universal work. When all actions are done in this unegoistic, unbragging way, they become occasions and mirrors of our inner growth, reflectors of our brightening consciousness—they "speak" for us, with the radiant eloquence of Truth which no boasting or bragging can ever imitate.

Behind the plain surface of the message, one feels a vibrating dynamo of

## THE NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE

force and a pledge and prophecy of a period of growth and expansion and achievements. The Divine has a surer grip on Matter today than ever before, and Matter has a greater saturation of His Light. Not that all resistance has ceased, but it is certainly giving way under the increasing pressure of the descending Force. The aspiration for Light is becoming more and more intense and articulate in the heart of man, and a longing for unity and harmony seems to infect even his selfish interests. It would, indeed, be cynical to shut one's eyes to the glints of light that are filtering through the gloom of the present. These glints are the heralds of the glory of the future. Let there be no vaunts, individual and collective, darkening and lowering the consciousness of the workers of the Divine, and tempting the undivine forces to confound their lofty purpose in the era that the new year's message inaugurates; for, the hour of victory approaches, and the Mother's voice rings, clear and commanding, above the tumult of the present crisis:

"Leaving the past far behind us, let us march towards a luminous future."

RISHABHCHAND

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Imitation is sometimes a good training-ship; but it will never fly the flag of the admiral.

Rather hang thyself than belong to the horde of successful imitators.

SRI AUROBINDO



## SRI AUROBINDO\*

IT is a great privilege for me to have been invited to meet all of you in this place which is not only a place of worship but also a place for the translation of that worship into concrete acts of love and friendship and brotherhood. I recall the occasion about 4 or 5 years ago when my friends in Bombay who are running the Sri Aurobindo Centre there, invited me to speak to them. I have been a very humble student of Sri Aurobindo since long but I should say that I have never had the ambition of speaking or of interpreting or of saying or advising on matters which have flowed from him and have irrigated the land of India and, I should say, all spiritual minds throughout the world. But it happened that my friends called me on that occasion to speak something about Sri Aurobindo. This is the next occasion when I am appearing in the midst of friends who have been devoted to Sri Aurobindo and to all that he has preached and lived for and is living still in our midst. I do not believe that such souls can pass away out of our ken. It might be that our physical or intellectual eyes cannot see him but if we go deeper, I think, it is such great Souls that inhabit the higher atmosphere and it is their inspiration and light which give us what little light we have in our hearts and which guides us from time to time.

It is really a very great crisis, if I may say so, in which all of us are living. On one side is the call of action, the call of external life, the call of almost unceasing activity, the call of the body, the call of the mind, the call of the elemental urges of human nature. On the other, is the call which may be said to be an inner call,—the call of that central Power—a centre of Power rather—from which emanate all other things and which permeates and suffuses everything that is in existence. If I may say so, one is a movement from the periphery to the centre and the other is a movement from the centre to the periphery. There is no doubt that whether we try to move from the periphery to the centre or from the centre to the periphery, the object,—the aim,—of all of us seems to be the betterment of life and the betterment not only of individuals but of the whole of the society or of human kind.

\* Speech delivered at Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir on 27-12-1953

It is one thing to have a very great aim, and it is another to have the proper and right means to achieve that aim. If one starts from the periphery to the centre and if another starts from the centre to the periphery, it makes all the difference in the methodology of the science of human progress.

There is another conflict which is confronting us and that is as regards the attitude that we adopt towards existence, towards life, towards its problems and towards humanity. One attitude is that which looks upon the whole of existence as a material, mechanical existence in which the soul or spirit about which we speak is looked upon as the result of certain combinations of material forces. There is the other attitude which we call spiritual and which is in conflict with this material attitude and which says that all that exists emanates, derives its life, strength and power, and draws its very existence from the Spirit and nothing exists but the Spirit since matter itself is but a form of the Spirit. These are the two attitudes that people adopt, and thinkers in the modern world try to deduce from this attitude the principles of action, principles of thought, systems of philosophy and metaphysics. I think, of the two, the greater conflict is this one.

In India, it has been our tradition to have a number of systems of thought and philosophy. People have never been satisfied with a single approach to the Truth. If we have had the greatest spiritual geniuses, we have had also Charvakas who said, as in the Gita:

अपरस्परसंभूतं किमन्यत्कामहैतुकम्

What else but satisfaction of desires, is the purpose of all this? They say, there is no essential co-ordination between these forces. As between these two schools of thought, there are numerous systems of thought, such as Adwaitavad, Vishishtadwaitavad, and so on. I need not enumerate them here. I am sometimes very much pained when Dwaitavad, Adwaitavad and other systems which are essentially spiritualistic in outlook fight among themselves to such an extent, that they try to eliminate each other and look upon each other, as if one is the born enemy of the other. I think at such times, we entirely forget that there is another school of thought which is absolutely contradictory and prejudicial to the very existence of the idea of spirituality. It is that school which has to be fought rather than any other system or school of thought which essentially believes in the existence of the Spirit.

The materialistic school believes in what it sees, it feels, what it experiences through the Microscope, the Telescope, the Test-tube and such other things;

they believe that this is the be-all and the end-all and therefore their approach is naturally from the periphery to the centre, whereas, as I said, the other school believes that it is from the centre that everything emanates and therefore their attempt is to try to solve the problems of this world by trying to start from the centre towards the periphery. When this conflict is on, we, born in India and with a very rich heritage in the line of spirituality, naturally must try to see and understand what heritage we have brought. It is very easy now-a-days to pick up 'isms' here and there and feel satisfied that we have understood a particular school of thought,—that it is the best and that we ought to follow it and that it is the panacea for all the evils in the world. Because today the 'isms' are very active and have the mission and ambition of covering the whole world. By propagating the principles they hold strongly, they try to permeate the whole world with these ideas. Almost everyday, in and out, as we open books, newspapers, etc. we find that kind of propaganda being carried on. I read an American book recently, entitled "Immature Minds", and there the writer has very vividly described as to how the modern educated mind is being worked upon and influenced right from the rising of the sun to its setting, by innumerable influences which are being poured through newspapers, through cheap literature, through the Radio, through the Television and numerous other means of communication. He has drawn the conclusion that this results in what is called "immature minds". A man may be grown-up, he may have grey hair on his head, he may have read numerous books: may be a close reader of the daily newspaper including the advertisements,—but then, the author of the books says, what is the result?—The result is an 'immature mind', because he is all the time open to varied influences and the result is that he is not able to think for himself. If you ask him anything he will speak with you at a level—very high level possibly—but that level is the level of 'Imitation', of ready objective absorption but nothing beyond that, nothing living in it, nothing that shakes his mind to its roots, nothing that brings out his inner thought. Therefore I say it is very easy to believe in these 'isms' and start work and, therefore, it is all the more necessary for those who think, believe, and feel that they have a soul to lose or a soul to gain—it is for them absolutely necessary that they should try to be as deep and as profound as possible. At the same time we should see as to what it is that we have brought with us all along these 3 to 5 thousand years. Whether you call it hereditary or environmental, it is there in the atmosphere in which the Indian people live.

You will have observed that all the modern leaders of thought and action



in India during the last two hundred years or so,—however profoundly they might have been impressed by the West, however deeply they might have studied Western thought,—when they began work in India and thought of speaking to the masses, thought of speaking to the common Indian, they had to fall back upon this rich heritage, this trend towards spirituality—this love of sacrifice, of service, of the inner Truth, and everyone of them,—right from Raja Ram Mohan Roy, a long series of big people that we have had, had to line up. Whatever the influence on their minds of Western thought, they had ultimately to come to the Upanishads, the Bhagavad-Gita or whatever other book it might be. And that has happened to Sri Aurobindo in the highest degree. He was kept away by his parent—his father—from everything that was Indian—Indian culture, spirituality, Indian influence, and Indian ways of life even,—and yet when he stepped on the shores of India, almost uninvited a rush of spirituality or a spiritual calm descended upon his mind. The description that he has given of it, is well known to everybody who has read about his life. And, thence possibly began his real and earnest search, and you know the result. Fortunately he was not like Sri Ramkrishna Paramahansadev who did not know anything of the West,—he had not been influenced in any way by the West or by her thought or culture or her ways of life. Sri Aurobindo was fully suffused with Western thought, its civilisation, its methods and ways of life, and yet was so utterly taken up with spirituality that he could later synthesise both and give us a picture of the future as to what may come and would come by a real living synthesis of both these trends of thought.

I was speaking about two movements, one of matter, the other of the spirit, and I was also speaking as to how these movements, though seemingly contradictory, can be synthesised and, I think, Sri Aurobindo is the very embodiment of the synthesis of these two powerful forces seemingly cancelling each other, seemingly in a death-grip with each other. Sri Aurobindo was not merely a teacher of the synthesis of Yoga, he was also the teacher of the synthesis of these two mighty forces, and therefore he proclaims that Matter itself is Spirit and he also says that it is by realising these two nodes of existence as it were, that we can arrive at the real Truth. It is only then that we can understand his emphasis on the idea of Purushottama, for all these contradictory forces find their synthesis in the Purushottama. I think, since we are at a crisis—individuals, groups, nations as well as the whole humanity may be said to be in a crisis—in this critical juncture, it is the great responsibility of India, to rise to the occasion as she has this rich

heritage of the past, and also because these seers have called us afresh not merely to what has been said in the past but to something which is said in the present and in connection with the future. We need not think that all that has been said, has been said once for all and nothing new is going to be said.

Many people sometimes ask me as to what is new in Sri Aurobindo; it is the old Advaita Vedanta and does not seem to be much more than that, they say. I have been trying to understand the urge that carried Sri Aurobindo to the highest stand from which he spoke. I think, if all his books are totally forgotten and if the one single urge to reach the summit of consciousness that inspired him inspires us all, that would be the greatest possible service that could be done by a Seer to humanity. Much more so, of course, if we read and study in that perspective what he has given to us—much more so also, if we formulate our minds and our course of action inspired by his works. We have enough of what we have got from the past but we cannot go on looking backward all the time because that shows poverty—both of creativeness and of vision as regards the future. We must be inspired by the vision of the future and at the same time, we must be inspired by the confidence that we are here and now led by Seers like Sri Aurobindo who are capable of creating a new spiritual outlook that is necessary not only for the present but also for the future.

We oftentimes say that India is spiritual but the Westerners who come here laugh at us and say: 'That is your spirituality—millions and millions are dying of hunger, millions and millions are steeped in ignorance, millions are going without any medical help, millions are there with pale faces, with little nourishment—and you speak of the Gita and spirituality.' They laugh at us and, I think, that in that laugh is the challenge of materiality to spirituality. They say—'You may be spiritual people! Well, we shall take you to the small nation of Denmark and you will see that, without spirituality, the people there are brilliant, young, buoyant, fresh, doing so much of social service, doing things on a very big scale for the service of the people,' and so on and so forth. I do not think that we can survive with our spirituality unless we take up that challenge, and that challenge can be taken up not by bifurcating and divorcing spirituality from materiality but by synthesising both and looking at them as two nodes of the Supreme and by infusing spirituality into materiality to such an extent that materialists will have to look up and say: 'We have been all along believing in materialism and we were absorbed in something like *Avidya*, let us shake

hands with each other,—with *Avidya* let us conquer the world and with *Vidya* let us conquer the Spirit.' I think it is along that line that our action, our thought and our future progress should lie. If we are to learn anything from Sri Aurobindo, it is this important truth, which may be said to be the Truth of the system of philosophy that we ought to follow. He has fortunately written so much, with such vigour, and on so many subjects that we can dip anywhere and find gems enough to satisfy our modern needs.

Some would say, 'No doubt Sri Aurobindo and some others had reached great heights but we, common people, despair about the heights that they have reached,—we are busy with day-to-day life, with our struggle for existence, with children and wife and so many other dependants to feed, with hard conditions of life,—what can we do? It is better to follow materiality and get all our needs fulfilled rather than follow spirituality leading to a bleak desert? There, precisely, I should assert that it is not leading to a bleak desert. If rightly followed, it has the power and the strength to irrigate all deserts and turn them into beautiful gardens. But we must understand spirituality in its integrality. Unfortunately, spirituality oftentimes is understood not in its integrality or totality but only in a partial aspect of it. If, at all, there is any Super-Spirit which is responsible for all that exists, I believe that it is not negligent of what is going on, it is supremely alert and carries this chariot of evolution according to its laws from step to step. Might be, this world-order may not satisfy us who oftentimes wishfully think that this should be or should not be so and so. If everyone of us tries to judge the world from his own point of view then, I think, we are trying to impose our own individual intellectual interpretation on the order of existence which is conceived as a whole. It is not an order which can be judged thus by bits. I think we ought to look at the totality of existence and take an integral view of spirituality. I think if we view and follow spirituality in this way, we shall certainly be able to achieve what is implied in the whole teaching of spirituality. I think that there is today very great need of spirituality. We must make up our minds to earnestly follow the spiritual path. Ultimately, it is the Spirit which is the very home of all force and the source of power.

You will remember that when Buddha was disappointed with all the other methods of austerity, of Tapasya, he went over to one Alarkalam who gave him the lesson of Rajayoga and the method of training his mind so that he may be full of *Maitree*, *Karuna* and *Kalyana*; and it was by going that way that he achieved Sambodhi. As a result, his whole future life changed



and he gave to the world the gospel of "Be good and do good". But the method of Sadhana was the method of inner seeking.

If I may say so, the method of approaching human problems only from outside, only from the material point of view, is like the approach from the periphery, from the circumference. It is like the symptomatic, curative treatment of our medical brotherhood. If there is some fever, some rise in temperature, they immediately try to bring it down, by the medicines they administer. It is symptomatic, curative treatment. It is neither preventive nor that which goes to the root-cause of the malady. I think all methods, all remedies to destroy evil in this world from the material standpoint, are like this. I never for a moment doubt that like others the materialists too have as their aim the betterment of humanity. But their methodology and approach differs, because it is merely symptomatic and curative and not from the point of view of rooting out the cause of the trouble. What is needed today is prevention of the disease, making humanity immune from these troubles and problems. Social service has its use no doubt, we must consider that, and we must engage ourselves in social service, but what is the result? There will have to be always an army of social servants in every age and in every country, and to the end of time there will be social problems and millions born to go through the same miseries, the same ignorance. There will always be an ailing society and a number of doctors to administer medicines. But what should be our aim, if we think more rationally? We should aim at having a healthy society with healthy human beings who are born fresh with minds, feelings, bodies brilliant and radiant with health. If that is what we aim at, then, I think we have to go to the root of the matter, not merely with the aim of curing but with the higher aim of prevention. No doubt, there are hundreds of remedies today, but at the same time what is happening?—new diseases are coming up. More psychiatrists are in evidence and more mental hospitals are being built. A number of different devices are being found to see that all these new diseases also are cured. This is not, however, a fundamental cure nor a prevention. Things recur and go on recurring. So, I think, here again Sri Aurobindo is very original—he asks us to go to the root of the matter.

Though the materialist sometimes make fun of spirituality and the Spirit, they too are trying to go to the root. But that is from outside, from the periphery. If you read something about the biological experiments, you find that scientists have come to the conclusion that wherever evolutionary changes are taking place, they are doing so in the gene, in the seed and not

in the body. No doubt, social services and other things ought to be there so long as there are social evils and we must fight them. But we should not ignore research as regards going to the root of the matter. That can be done only by striving that far better human beings are born with physical, mental and moral health. But, then, that too is not enough. After all, what is the body? Even in the West, very great medical authorities are coming to the psycho-somatic theory that mind and body are one entity, they act and react on each other. Spirituality declares that, man is not the body alone, man is not the mind alone, man is not the power of feeling alone, man is a composite of all these; but all these emanate from Spirit which cannot be put into a Test-tube. May be, time may come when the manifestation of the Spirit, the movement of the Spirit may be capable of being demonstrated on the material level. But, then, today we have to be guided by seeing actually great souls, and what they do through intuition, and by the power of the higher consciousness. Here Sri Aurobindo has pointed out to us that a higher race, a greater new race is in the making. There can be absolutely no doubt about it. If somebody had said when man was not yet born on this planet and evolution had come up only to the ape, that the ape was not the last of creation and that another animal was in the making—a human being with mind, with greater powers, with far more delicate nervous system, with a brain, that would be able to weave mighty systems of thought, manufacture fine instruments, devise new methods of using the forces of Nature, it would have been looked upon as a fantastic dream. But all that is now a fact after a few million years.

I think, when we are absorbed by what exists today and our eyes do not see what is beyond, we are prone to say that what we have today and what exists would exist forever without change. The mind is after all in the midst of the present current. It sees the present and misses the flow which is eternal. We are somewhere in the stream. We cannot say that the stream ends here and nothing more is going to happen. The stream is flowing with the original creativeness in it and there is a call of the future. Since this current is flowing along, a time must come when better men, better in essence, must be born. Men like Sri Aurobindo had far better and greater insight into these matters. Possibly he could physically and not merely mentally feel the flow of evolution. I think, he has seen far ahead and harkened to us as to what is going to happen, and that we must play our part. If we do not play our part, then it would be like standing on the banks of the Ganges and not taking advantage of a nice bath. The Ganges will never invite us to have a dip in it, it is for us

## THE ADVENT

to cleanse our hands in it, and to wash our bodies in its water. Let us meditate on the current of higher thoughts—let them rush into our brains to purify us. I think, that should be one's attitude. If we are sensitive enough, I am sure, we shall have the power of taking advantage of the current of this great stream of spirituality.

I do not think I should detain you this sweet morning, when you have invited me to visit this centre. When Sri Sen saw me last and asked me to speak on this occasion, I told him, 'please excuse me, it is only to pay a tribute that I am coming there. If you announce that I will be speaking, then somehow I shall talk but not speak!' And, thus there was a compromise, and I have talked. I do not know if I have thrown any new light because it is like carrying coals to Newcastle. The mine is here and nobody can bring from outside anything that is not here. However, I can certainly say that I have been benefited and to that I can stand witness. I am very thankful to all of you for having given me this opportunity of meeting you in such a very sacred place and pure atmosphere. With these few words, I again thank you.

R. R. DIWAKAR.



# *The Human Cycle*

(AN ABRIDGEMENT)

## CHAPTER I

### THE CYCLE OF SOCIETY

FOLLOWING the spirit of modern science and its obsession of the sole reality of Matter, in our history and sociology there is an emphasis on economic factors to the neglect of psychological elements. Recently, the supremacy of this attitude has been questioned, and a deeper view of things is on the way. Lamprecht, a German thinker, has presented a first suggestive psychological theory of history. There are, according to him, four stages or cycles—symbolic, typical and conventional, individualistic, and subjective—through which a nation or civilisation has to move. It will be worth while to follow up his suggestions in the light of Eastern thought and experience.

Indeed, in all early societies we find a strong symbolic mentality that governs it. The little-understood Vedic Age, for instance, its rituals of sacrifice and marriage, the relation between men and women, its fourfold order. From this we pass on to the typical order with its increasing fixity of type, and as this moves towards the conventional stage the external supports, a system of rigid grades and hierarchies grows more important till in the end the whole thing turns into a sham. Then arrive men of intellectual power and we have the Age of Reason, Revolt, Progress, Freedom. Limited in aim and method, it is yet a necessary passage to the subjective period of humanity with its potentialities of a deeper self-discovery.

## CHAPTER II

### THE AGE OF INDIVIDUALISM AND REASON

The failure of the conventional and the petrified typical figure brings in the individualistic age of human society. Utilitarian and rationalistic, it

is of European origin, the East has entered into it only by contact and influence. In its beginning a revolt of reason, it has ended, inevitably, with physical Science. Speculative and scientific reason for their means, the pursuit of a practicable social justice and some utility for their spirit, the progressive nations of Europe set out on their search for this light and this law. They found and held it with enthusiasm in the discoveries of physical Science. It has been the fulfilment and triumph of the individualistic age of human society, it has seemed also likely to be its end. For this discovery by individual free-thought of universal laws of which the individual is almost a by-product and by which he must necessarily be governed, the attempt actually to govern the social life of humanity in conscious accordance with the mechanism of these laws—such as a rigid economic or governmental Socialism—seems to lead logically to the suppression of that very individual freedom which made the discovery and the attempt at all possible. But this may not be, for already rationalistic and physical Science has overpassed itself and newer psychological and psychic knowledge is likely. Secondly, the triumphant West has awakened the slumbering East. If the East follows its own bent and evolves a new social tendency and culture, this is bound to have an enormous influence on the direction of world's civilisation.

But individualistic Europe has found out two important idea-forces in this respect: the democratic conception of the right of all individuals as members of the society to full life and the deeper truth that the individual is not merely a social unit but something in himself, a soul, a being,—an idea that agrees at its roots with the profoundest spiritual conception of Asia and has a large part to play in the moulding of the future.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE COMING OF THE SUBJECTIVE AGE

To return to the original ideas themselves for the light would be, one might think, the shortest way for an individualistic age of mankind. But this is not possible, for such return is likely to be a reaction and in any case would not serve the need of a developing humanity in which, if the old is at all taken up, it must be transformed and exceeded. It is this prin-

## THE COMING OF THE SUBJECTIVE AGE

ciple that justifies an age of individualism and rationalism. In India since the great Buddhistic upheaval there has been a series of such attempts, but insufficiently militant and destructive. It is only with the period of European influences and impact that a radical and effective revaluation of ideas has come into existence.

The individualistic age, proceeding by individual mind and reason, however, must go from the individual to the universal. In Europe in modern times that has taken the form of physical Science. But after a time it must become apparent that this is not the whole knowledge; that man is a mental as well as a physical and vital being. Therefore to find the truth of things and the law of his relation to that truth he must go deeper and fathom the subjective secret of himself and things. This he may attempt to do for a time by the power of critical and analytical reason, but not for long. For in his study of himself he cannot but come face to face with the soul in himself and the soul in the world and find it to be an entity so profound, so complex and so full of hidden secrets and powers that his intellectual reason betrays itself as an insufficient light and fumbling seeker.

All these tendencies are manifest in the world to-day. The art, music, and literature of the world have also undergone a profound revolution in the direction of an ever-increasing subjectivism, from the vital to a mental, intuitional and psychic, pointing the direction in which the human mind is being piloted on a momentous voyage of discovery. This can be seen also in the new ideas about education and upbringing of the child.

The nascent subjectivism shows itself not so much in the relation of individuals or in the dominant ideas and tendencies of social development but in the collective self-consciousness of man in the nation. It is here that we shall see most clearly what is its actual drift and the goal towards which the social cycle, entering this phase, is intended to arrive in its wide revolution.

*(To continue)*

SISIR KUMAR GHOSH



## REVIEWS

(1) **Natural Selection of Political Forces** by *Adolf A. Berle, Jr.*, University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, Kansas, U.S.A. 1950 pp. 103 \$ 2.00.

"Nothing is more obscure to humanity or less seized by its understanding...than its own communal and collective life." This observation of Sri Aurobindo heightens our appreciation of the service rendered by this small but potent volume.

Its author, Professor of Law in Columbia University, is qualified to appraise the political forces whose struggle forms the crisis of our time. From the relative detachment of his professorial sanctum he can look back upon significant years spent in the maelstrom of international politics. As special adviser to the American Commission to Negotiate Peace after World War I, he took part in the first of his many international conferences. He was Assistant Secretary of State for the U.S.A. during the turbulent years 1938-44, and Ambassador to Brazil 1945-46.

The author justifies his daring to advance a hypothesis regarding the evolution—the life and death—of political forces, on the ground that "the condition of the political world at present requires boldness of scientific approach. Rather, explanation is called for from students of political science who have not yet attempted a synthesis, and have therefore left men as political animals to struggle in a world which appears to be anarchic." Cassirer, in *The Myth of the State*, avers that social science, and particularly the science of politics, is still so nebulous that efforts to put it on a rational footing bear about the same relationship to the political science which will one day exist as medieval astrology bears to modern astronomy.

Berle rejects as "poetic speculations" both the pessimistic prognostications of Spengler in his *Decline of the West* and the optimistic prophecies of Toynbee in his monumental *Study of History*. He ventures a hypothesis which he believes to be fairly based on the evidence of the centuries, a verdict which he feels carries rational conviction:

- I. The law of political force—of any kind or order or magnitude—is governed in its creation and continuance by natural laws which appear to be invariable and constant.

II. There exists a law of selection of political forces somewhat analogous to the law of selection of species in the world of biology.

III. Selection favours political forces

- 1) which tend to approach universality within their field of application; and
- 2) which give to individuals a sense of harmony with the universal pattern.

Selection discards political forces

- 1) which are based on limitative conceptions such as exclusion, aggrandizement, hatred, and the like; and
- 2) which tend to concentrate power without modifying that power by imposing, in some form, corresponding responsibility.

A political force is composed of a "centrally attractive idea"—its nucleus—and an "apparatus", which is "a combination of methods, persuasion, incentives and pressures by which individuals are held in organization or relationship to achieve the ends sought by the political force." The apparatus may be mild, as in the case of a truly democratic political party, or severe, as in the totalitarian or police state. Where the apparatus is extreme, it tends to discard the original nuclear ideas and ideals, importing others that promise to serve better its drive towards greater power. Thus revolutions have gone astray, abandoning their original idealism. "Liberté, égalité, fraternité", the watchwords of the French Revolution, with its emphasis on individual freedom from various tyrannies, gave way within a decade of "liberations" of other peoples by military might to a Napoleon who discarded, in the end, the ideology of the Revolution in his pursuit of imperial ambitions.

The author traces also the steps by which the originally attractive and "harmless" thesis of the Hitlerian Revolution of 1933—the restoration of order, employment and economic benefit to Germany—was replaced by the Nazi apparatus with a quite separate group of notions whose central idea was that of a "universal empire", based on the right of Nazi racialists to rule other peoples because of their self-proclaimed innate physical, mental and even moral superiority.

The author points out the same tendency in the Russian Revolution. The original emphasis on economic and social liberation has gradually been overshadowed by the drive of the ruthless apparatus of the police state, with its purges and its mammoth slave labour camps, by machinations, under the shadow of the Red Army, to overthrow neighbouring govern-

ments, and by aggressive diplomacy—all tending towards maximum aggrandisement of Soviet power.

Mr. Berle believes history indicates that "where the force of the apparatus and the force of the central idea are in balance the political force tends to be stable—that is, to survive. Where they are out of balance, the political force tends to disintegrate." The apparatus may "throttle the central ideal, becoming a naked power mechanism doomed eventually to break up... because of its own internal animosities, and of its lack of ability to command acquiescence." The author declares that "the facts indicate, indeed, that the nuclear conception of the Communist Revolution has already been strangled by its own apparatus, just as philosophical democracy was shattered by Napoleon."

This study of the life and death of political forces leads to the conclusion that "a political force appears to be 'good' in proportion as its centrally attractive ideal approaches possibility of universal application." Any such limitative ideal as that of perpetual enmity for all who oppose or disagree bears the seeds of disintegration. Likewise, those political forces are "good" when the central ideal itself severely restricts or prevents the apparatus and the men who constitute it from violating the central ideal. The domination of a self-perpetuating oligarchy, even a sizeable one, on the theory that the end justifies the means, tends therefore toward self-destruction, in the view of Dr. Berle.

When the author, however, describes Christianity as "the greatest world revolution in recorded history" he fails, we regret to say, to distinguish between its achievements as a moral and religious influence and its career as a political force. Its "triumph" on the stage of history he traces to the ideal of universal love taught and exemplified by the Christ, whose utter exclusion of hatred automatically inhibits any limitative quality. It is significant that Mr. Berle does not trouble to expound and elucidate his view anent the supposed victory of Christ in the course of Western Christendom. Was it not, in fact, precisely during the period of the Church's rise to political power under Constantine and thereafter that it abandoned Jesus' sublime principle of universal love in favor of the sword, not in the Gita's spirit of devotion and equanimity, but with vindictive treatment of all opponents and dissenters as "enemies of Christ"? What became of the Christ's magnanimous spirit of universality when the Church set itself up as a divine viceregency, a supreme court to brand and banish and burn "heretics" or, as in this genteel modern day, to hold to an exclusive and



divisive position when human unity is essential for survival? However, one doubtful instance does not nullify the validity and importance of the central thesis of the book.

The author adopts Alexis Carrel's conclusion from the study of evolution, particularly from the extinction of prehistoric monsters, that adaptability, rather than specific, predetermined defence or offence is the quality that leads to political, as it did to animal survival. He says, "Indeed one of the most dangerous aspects of today's world-division lies precisely in the fact that the two principal ideologies now struggling for supremacy are both more than a century old—both probably approaching obsolescence in the light of the twentieth-century knowledge—both outdated."

Yet there is an important difference between liberal democracy and Leninist-Stalinist Communism. "The liberal conception of democratic nationalism is by its nature capable of absorbing new economic forms." This implies that it might discard, or modify substantially, a capitalism that had served its day.

"This is one of its greatest merits. Democratic procedure and popular participation offer precisely that opportunity—partly because they refuse to accept, as we have seen, the extreme apparatus of dictatorship, with accompanying denial of civil rights, machinery of a police state, and strangulation of the central concept. Leninist Communism as a political force has no such absorptive quality. In many, perhaps most, respects Leninism is more rigid even than the old king-state. It cannot absorb: it must conquer; it must liquidate where it cannot convert. Possibly conscious of this, the Leninist of today makes a religion of his rigidity, and even has his dialectic poets write hymns to the glory of the secret police. A liberal democrat can look objectively at the tenets of Communism and learn from them. It is of the essence of the Leninist conception that it has nothing to learn from the outside, and that it cannot be objective about anything."

Dr. Berle believes that the age of the accurate selection of political forces may be at hand. In any case, he sees our generation as inescapably in "the valley of decision." If it does not exercise with wisdom its selective function, Nature will see that her laws of selection are not violated with impunity. In that event the cost may be ghastly in an atomic era.

Not the disciple's zeal but stark necessity prompts the reviewer to a question or two. If we are indeed "in the valley of decision", and if, as

the author avers, "the vast and terrible drama of this selection (of political forces) is opening throughout most of the world;" if "cool reason offers little basis for hope...that the grimmest of all forms of selection—selection by world war—can be ultimately avoided", then how can the author address himself to rational beings and leave untouched the all-important how? How can a significant portion of the world's citizenry be led to make a deliberate selection of the political forces that can mean survival and progress? How can the forces of democratic liberalism be mobilized to meet the crisis of the age? How can the non-governmental organizations of the world—labour unions, religious groups, organizations of women, youth, professional people, et al.—with some 450,000,000 members, be used as channels for intensive education in world citizenship?

Not prediction but prevention of disaster would seem to be the task of leaders as experienced and as wise as Dr. Berle. To be sure, we may be grateful, as Sri Aurobindo suggests, for a world *ordered* in the clash of its forces, rather than an infinite chaos; it is indeed better that we should see the wherefore of our doom, if doomed we are as a race. But is there not a Force that can master political and other forces, in the service of the grand design that underlies the drama of history? Is there not a Force greater than that of blind Samson which is bent on an egoistic triumph even if it means pulling down the pillars of civilization on himself and all besides?

There may be a certain comfort in the knowledge that the universe itself exercises "selection", whatever man may do, but the point is, how can man cooperate with the universe, with the Divine, in the creation of a sufficient number of conscious cooperators to turn the stream of history into a new channel? These are not mere rhetorical questions.

Studying this book has been a stimulating experience. It is clear and incisive in style and replete with rewarding insights. Its weakness is that of liberal intellectuals in being strong on analysis but weak in coming to grips with the problem of power.

JAY HOLMES SMITH

## (2) Albert Schweitzer's Ethics

Albert Schweitzer's important work is contained in his four volumes "The Philosophy of Civilisation" ("Kulturphilosophie"). The second volume "Civilization and Ethics", which was originally written in 1923,

contains the kernel of his thought on the problem of ethics and its relation to the modern world, and it is this book which forms the basis of this present review. I should like however, to state at the outset that whatever criticism is made here concerns Schweitzer's written work, and does not reflect on the great work of devotion for which he has given his life and surrendered his genius. For the past forty years he has devoted himself to an unpretentious and primitive hospital that was set up in the heart of French Equatorial Africa. It is a hospital for the sick Africans of the district, in an area that swarms with all the known tropical diseases. He gave up a brilliant and promising career for this. He was already a professor of philosophy, a theologian and an accomplished musician. But he felt the inner call to serve humanity—in some humble, though practical way. A doctor-missionary was needed in Central Africa, and Schweitzer qualified for the post by studying medicine, and adding a fourth doctorate to his already triple doctorates in philosophy, theology and music. From 1913 he has been quietly serving this chosen section of humanity in his own humble and devoted way. The world has recently recognised his work by rewarding him with the Nobel Prize for Peace.

As we can expect, Schweitzer is an inveterate optimist and a firm believer in the ultimate betterment of the world; and being a man of action rather than of words, ethics (in practice) is for him the highest truth. For him human behaviour is the most practical concern of man, and this means not merely individual behaviour, but above all a sympathetic and helpful interest in the life of others. From this point of view he sees that three of the major interests of man's life,—his rational thought, his world experience, and his supra-rational experience (or mysticism),—are three streams that feed ethics and make it a living and enduring basis for life.

Ethics is both a personal and social activity. One sees the personal aspect of Ethics more developed in the Eastern systems, which are (or were) strongly influenced by a world-negating outlook that has tended to subordinate the wider social needs of humanity (outside the family and communal groups). On the other hand the personal aspect has been neglected in Western ethics, where a man is judged mainly on his social behaviour. Schweitzer believes that both Eastern and Western ethics are incomplete in themselves, and have to learn from each other in order to create a complete ethics for both the individual and social needs of the modern world. In this earlier book on ethics (mentioned above), Schweitzer reviews only the contribution of western philosophy—mainly German—to this problem, but in a later work



he deals with the Indian contribution to ethics (including the Buddhist). This latter book is entitled "Indian Thought and its Development" (English publication 1934). In this book he shows how Eastern philosophy had developed its world-and life-negating outlook, while the West (as he shows in his earlier book) had developed an optimistic world affirmation. It was with these opposing factors that Sri Aurobindo had commenced "The Life Divine". But while Sri Aurobindo traced the reconciliation of these two negations as residing ultimately in the Oneness of the Divine, Schweitzer believes that the reconciliation can only come through Ethics,—which seems, one ventures to suggest, an individual solution, and not the universal solution that Sri Aurobindo propounds.

Schweitzer declares: "He who sacrifices his life to achieve any purpose for an individual or for humanity is practising life-affirmation". He who offers his own life to bring about something in the world which he regards as necessary, shows a sacrifice that is not life-negation, but life-affirmation which is the basis of true ethics. This is Schweitzer's reply to the world-negating asceticism which he saw dominant in India. He sees, however, that the great contribution of Eastern ethics is that it set self-perfection of the individual as the central factor of endeavour,—that is, right inwardness of human action, right ethical attitude of mind, and the true peace of the soul. This attitude led to the high aim of evaluating mysticism as the goal of life,—that is, a spiritual union with the infinite Being. This is expressed in the realisation of the One, both in oneself and in all things. Such mysticism, Schweitzer says, must be the basis of all ethics. But while Schweitzer leaves the matter there, Sri Aurobindo has gone further in declaring that mysticism is only fulfilled when Divine Love has entered into Life, and Life, through man, has become permeated with that Love. This is the basis of the next stage in the upward ascent of Life, when man becomes conscious of his true relation with God and the world, and realises the supreme Oneness; and hence he must strive to bring this realisation into his worldly life through an increasing mutual co-operation and an inner understanding between men, through the realisation of the Divine.

Schweitzer has analysed fully the problem regarding the incompleteness of world ethics, but his solution of it in terms of man and the universe alone (not mentioning the important place of God and the soul, which may be taken for granted but not expressed), leaves much to be desired, except in so far as it justifies his own action. Although he realises the incompleteness of both Eastern and Western thought, he does not see eye to eye with Sri

Aurobindo when the latter says that India holds in her hands the key to the progress of humanity. He believes rather that Indian thought must turn more and more towards Western world-and life-affirmation; but he did not realise that Sri Aurobindo did not stop at that statement, but proceeded from that basis to deliver his life-affirming revelation of the all-embracing unitary Reality. When Schweitzer says, "we await the Indian thinker who will expound to us the mysticism of spiritual union with infinite Being as it is in itself," it would seem that his prognostication has been answered in Sri Aurobindo's mighty revelation in "The Life Divine" (which one supposes was not accessible to him at the time of his writing, since he seems to have been familiar with only a minor fragment of Sri Aurobindo's work).

It is significant, however, that through his own ethics in life Schweitzer has come very close to Sri Aurobindo's world-view of ethics, where ethics expresses also a deep reverence for Life, in its widest sense. The chief divergence is that Schweitzer bases his whole world-view on ethics, and hence shuts himself off from the Divine Knowledge and Truth. One feels that when he has found the Divine Truth from which Ethics itself is derived, and on which it wholly depends, he will have made the most valuable link the world now needs,—namely the bringing of the Divine Reality to the very centre of man's actions and doings in the world.

It is a pity that Schweitzer's writings are not so lucid and clear as one would wish, (and perhaps also his work suffers through translation from the original German). One feels, in reading him, to be in the dense jungle where he has made his home and life's work, and consequently his thought is as difficult to reach as he himself is in his sanctum. His main thesis in his "Civilization and Ethics" is largely overshadowed by a long drawn-out attempt to show the failure of Western thought and philosophy to come to grips with the living basis of ethics. Being purely an intellectual approach, it expressed the attempt of thought to impose its own law on life. Schweitzer shows that true ethics can only begin from the standpoint of life—with a reverence for life. Thought would then contribute to, and not impose itself on this ethical reverence. Because of its purely external and worldly outlook, western ethics has not been able to show the individual how to deal naturally and directly from his own inner being with the world around him. It has concentrated on social relationship without considering the very springs of personal action. Ethical sayings and commandments are not sufficient without the deeper awakening within the individual concerning his true relation with others. We might say that while India has contributed



the highest ideal of individual ethics (based on the concept of brahma-charya), the West has contributed through Christianity the applied ethics of active devotion to one's neighbour.

Schweitzer here—and rightly so—distinguishes between the real ethics of Christ's teaching, and the modern teachings of the Church. We are inclined to agree with Schweitzer when he says that Christ taught men to practise unbounded devotion to one another, not with the aim of universal brotherhood, but in order to attain the necessary *inner* perfection needed to enter into the kingdom of God. The worldly aim of brotherhood came into the Christian teachings only after the influence of the Greek tradition had impressed itself on European thought (through the writings of Seneca and Epictetus). Thereafter the external affairs of life became the dominant concern, and the inner development was of lesser account. This process was aided by the growth of scientific knowledge. The decline of ethics in the West was a natural consequence of this purely worldly outlook, as the efforts, to erect a basis of ethics, of the philosophers of the 18th. and 19th. centuries—from Kant to Hegel—show. These philosophers by taking the purely intellectual approach to ethics produced systems that had little practical basis in life. Schweitzer insists—and rightly so—that ethics must begin from within the individual himself, and must be primarily based on life and action in life. It is individual action that ultimately has to forge new paths in ethics. And here we have to see that Schweitzer's work in the depths of Africa is the real expression of his ethics, and not so much his books. We can have nothing but admiration for the devotion, personal sacrifice, and indifference to gain, which the forty years in the equatorial jungle has demanded of him. He himself shows in a practical and enduring way the true relation between ethics and life, which is worth more than a library of books on the subject.

Although Schweitzer sees mysticism as an essential factor in a fuller life, it is from the point of view of mysticism not as an end in itself, but returning to life and giving to it a harmony, balance and deeper meaning of the world and to one's actions. Here we see how naturally Schweitzer's conclusions meet these problems discussed so comprehensively by Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo shows that life in its present stage, based on the law of mutual devouring, is not the final state or condition of life. There is an ascent of Life, and the first steps, which are now looming clearer to the world, demand that mutual aid, common understanding, and co-operation become the motives of men's actions. This will come with the growing



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consciousness in man of Divine Love, and its action in the world. It is here that self-giving comes in,—a self-giving with no idea of gain or reward behind it, but a frank and open giving where the very openness itself becomes a widening of consciousness. Schweitzer has certainly shown in his own selfless devotion the truth of this self-giving in action.

Criticism is humbled and silenced by this high and noble example of Schweitzer's. Ultimately we have to say that Schweitzer is right, in his own life's action and standpoint, and that the world has yet very much to learn from this one man's most unostentatious work.

N. PEARSON.

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